

Town of Bethel Town Council Meeting Minutes

May 4, 2021 | 7:00PM

(1) Meeting Called to Order: The meeting was called to order by Town Council President, K. Phillips, at 7:00 P.M. Present were Town Council President: K. Phillips, President Pro Tempore: V. Proctor, Treasurer: M. Shaver, Secretary: E. Whaley, Member at Large: R. Campfield, and Town Clerk: Martha Hawkins.

(2) Pledge of Allegiance: The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Town Council President, K. Phillips.

(3) Blue Hen Construction: Town Council President, K. Phillips, stated that at the April 2021 Town Council meeting Mr. Simpson gave a presentation regarding new residential construction on lots currently owned by Blue Hen Construction.

Mr. Simpson stated that the proposed residential construction will be made up of narrower houses compared to existing houses on School Lane and High Street, given the nature of the lots. Mr. Simpson stated that Blue Hen Construction is looking to utilize custom construction. Mr. Simpson stated that Blue Hen Construction tries to change up the elevation of each property, even if some houses have identical floor plans, while meeting the concerns and requirements of the city.

Town Council President, K. Phillips, brought up the issue of a potential third phase of a bio-retention relating to the Soil Conservation District. K. Phillips asked Mr. Simpson if he had investigated the possibility of a Phase III since the last Town Council meeting. Mr. Simpson stated that the Soil Conservation District had not brought anything to Blue Hen Construction's attention. Mr. Simpson went on to state that the Soil Conservation District is typically concerned with the way runoff water runs after building a house on the landscape. Mr. Simpson stated that he did not think there would be issues with drainage.

Town Council President, K. Phillips, stated that when there are heavy amounts of rain, water gathers in the area of the lots. R. Campfield agreed with K. Phillips. M. Shaver pointed out that the lots do not have vegetation yet.

Town Council President, K. Phillips, stated that there was good drainage in the area in question as every time a perk test is completed, it always passes because the sandy soil allows for good drainage. Mr. Simpson stated that after the last Town Council meeting he went to the lots in question and found there to be no standing water.

R. Campfield asked if the site is elevated when a house is built. Mr. Simpson stated that Blue Hen Construction uses four course foundations and explained that two courses go above ground and two go below ground. Town Council President, K. Phillips went on to say prior to 1948, the streets were paved in oyster shells with ditches on each side of the street, so he felt drainage was an issue at one time, then stated that Bethel has good soil.

R. Campfield brought up the issue of issuing permits on a lot by lot basis. Mr. Simpson stated that he was concerned because of changes to the Town Council and gave the example of the current Council favoring one design and then the next Council in a year or more wanting a different design. R. Campfield stated that the Town Council follows the Ordinances. Mr. Simpson followed up by stating that as long as he is within the Ordinances then there should not be an issue with the permits.

A resident questioned the enforcement of the Ordinances and building code. R. Campfield stated that the Town of Bethel has a building code and that it was completed in 2012. Ms. Kathy Layfield stated that the purpose of coming before Council was so the Town Council could know what was being built within town. Town Council President, K. Phillips stated that with the last lots Town Council knew there were certain designs, but with the possibility of custom houses the Town Council does not know what will be built. Mr. Simpson stated that on the website the Town of Bethel requires a minimum roof pitch and a minimum square footage. Mr. Simpson questioned if there were any other stipulations in effect in the ordinances. R. Campfield asked if Mr. Simpson had a copy of the Ordinances. Mr. Simpson stated no. R. Campfield stated that Mr. Simpson needed a copy of the Ordinances. Town Council President, K. Phillips, stated that it was on the internet. R. Campfield asked if the Ordinances were on the website. Town Clerk, M. Hawkins, stated that as far as she knew the Ordinances were on the Town's website. M. Shaver stated that he believed the only thing Town Council can enforce is the roof pitch and square footage. Mr. Simpson stated that he felt R. Campfield was referring to an architectural standard. Town Council President, K. Phillips, stated that he has attempted personally multiple times to draft architectural standards for the Town with no success.

Mr. Simpson questioned the main objection to the houses being built on School Lane. R. Campfield stated that she does not have any objections to the houses being built, but she heard that when the last round of houses were to be built that there were issues. Mr. Simpson addressed K. Phillips and asked if there were issues the last time houses were built. Town Council President, K. Phillips, stated that the Blue Hen Construction exceeded the minimum setback, by going 15 feet back. Mr. Simpson stated that Blue Hen Construction followed all of the Ordinances.

Town Council President, K. Phillips, stated that when the lots were subdivided, they were done in half acre lots, so the houses are close together. R. Campfield stated that she wanted to see more variance in the houses. Mr. Simpson stated that industry standard calls for all houses on a given street to have the equal setback.

Mr. Simpson stated that he understands and does not take issue with the current Ordinances and Blue Hen Construction will consider any other guidelines or recommendations Town Council has to offer. Mr. Simpson stated that he needs to know getting permits for the remaining lots will not be an issue. Mr. Simpson asked for a copy of Chapter 9 of the Ordinances to be electronically emailed to him for reference.

Town Council President, K. Phillips, asked for the status of the building permit approved during the April Town Council meeting. Mr. Simpson stated that construction was behind.

E. Whaley made the motion to approve the remaining eight (8) lots as long as Blue Hen Construction obtains building permits for each of the lots. The motion was seconded by R. Campfield. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Simpson left the meeting after the lots were voted on.

(4) Secretary's Report: E. Whaley presented the April Town Council Minutes.

R. Campfield asked if the Minutes were electronically emailed prior to the start of the meeting for review. E. Whaley stated that she submits the unapproved Minutes to the Town Clerk within eight (8) days of a Town Council meeting so the Town Clerk can post them on the Town of Bethel website for everyone's review. R. Campfield stated that it would be a time saver to look at the minutes before the start of the meeting.

Town Council President, K. Phillips, asked about Chapters Six and Nine of the Ordinances relating to Blue Hen Construction. K. Phillips stated that he felt Blue Hen Construction was given a copy of the Ordinances in 2012.

V. Proctor made several corrections. V. Proctor made a motion to accept the Minutes with corrections. R. Campfield seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

E. Whaley asked if she should bring up grant activities. Town Council President, K. Phillips, stated that it should be brought up under Old/New Business.

(5) Town Clerk's Report: Town Clerk, M. Hawkins, presented the Town Clerk's Report. Please see a copy of the report attached to this file.

R. Campfield made a motion to have the Town Clerk order new name plates. K. Phillips seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

R. Campfield made a motion to accept the Town Clerk's Report. V. Proctor seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

(6) Treasurer's Report: M. Shaver presented the Bills to be Paid. Please see a copy of the report attached to this file. V. Proctor made a motion to pay the bills as presented. R. Campfield seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

M. Shaver presented the Treasurer's Report. Please see a copy of the report attached to this file. R. Campfield made a motion to accept the Treasurer's Report as stated. V. Proctor seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

M. Shaver made a request to transfer \$15,000 from the Transfer account to the Operating Fund account. V. Proctor made a motion to transfer \$15,000 from the Transfer account to the Operating Fund account. E. Whaley seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

(7) Building Permits: Town Council President, K. Phillips, presented the building permits. One permit for Main St. exterior renovation. One permit for Vine St. for exterior renovation.

(8) Ordinance Permits: V. Proctor presented the Ordinance update. The proposed draft Ordinances have been presented to the Town's attorney. V. Proctor stated that since the last Town Council meeting, the Ordinance Committee has discussed two more chapters. After the proposed Ordinances have been approved by the attorney, the Town Council will need to move forward with the formal induction process.

(9) Animal Population Update: Town Clerk, M. Hawkins, presented an animal population update from Mary McCoy. Per email from Ms. McCoy, Forgotten Cats has been to West St. and trapped 13 cats. Forgotten Cats has five more cats to be trapped. Ms. McCoy reported in her email that she is the one responsible for paying for the cats.

(10) Community House Renovation Work: M. Shaver presented on the Community House renovation work. Flooring is slated to start soon. The drywall work in the office is almost complete.

M. Shaver gave an update on the Edward Jones account.

Town Council President, K. Phillips, stated that after the Community House renovation work is complete that it would be nice to have an open house event.

(11) Lupe's Landscaping: M. Shaver stated that last year, the Town paid Best Buds \$8,429. \$3,700 of the total cost went to maintaining the bio-beds. M. Shaver stated that he spoke with Lupe's Landscaping and for \$300 a month, Lupe Landscaping will maintain the bio-beds. Lupe's Landscaping will still maintain the park for \$50 a week. M. Shaver made a motion to have Lupe's Landscaping maintain the bio-beds for \$300 a month. E. Whaley seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

(12) Old/New Business: E. Whaley presented a letter written by resident, Ms. Peggy Anderson, asking for a "No Parking" sign on South Street. Please see the letter Ms. Anderson's letter attached. Discussion of the size of the sign was made by the Town Council. 12 by 18 was determined to be an acceptable size. Town Clerk, M. Hawkins, stated that she would take care of ordering the sign.

E. Whaley presented on grant related activities. E. Whaley asked the Town Council what they would like to spend the Sussex County Security grant funds on. E. Whaley presented on acceptable uses of the grant funds. E. Whaley stated that the easiest way to use the funds would be to put them towards speed enforcement. V. Proctor made a motion to use the grant for speed enforcement funds. R. Campfield seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Kough requested that the flags at the Bethel park be removed as they are in poor condition and many are touching the ground. Ms. Layfield stated that the flags should not be left out year-round. Town Council President, K. Phillips, stated that the Town of Bethel did not put the flags out. Mr.

Kough offered to remove the flags from the park for the Town. Ms. Layfield offered to give the flags to Ms. Trudy Parker as she takes flags to the American Legion for proper flag etiquette burning.

Ms. Layfield asked if \$300 a month for Lupe's Landscaping would work on all the water gardens, including her own. M. Shaver confirmed that she was correct.

Ms. Layfield asked for an update on the possibility of the Town of Bethel acquiring a lot on Main Street. M. Shaver stated that the lot is for sale and that he has spoken with Dave Smith. M. Shaver reported that Dave Smith would be willing to sell the Town the lot for \$60,000. M. Shaver also stated that Representative Tim Dukes said the Town of Bethel would be getting COVID-19 relief money. R. Campfield asked if the Town would purchase the lot on Main Street and the lot directly behind it. M. Shaver stated that Representative Tim Dukes was unsure if the Town would be able to spend the money to acquire land. Mr. LeCates asked for the size of the lot. M. Shaver stated that the lot is about an acre. Ms. Layfield asked if the purchase of the lot was contingent on the money from Representative Tim Dukes. R. Campfield stated that she spoke with Dave Smith today (May 4, 2021) about the lot beside her property. R. Campfield reported that Dave Smith said all of the lots will be sold for \$60,000 each. R. Campfield also stated that the Huffman family expressed interest in purchasing a lot. M. Shaver stated that either way, the Town of Bethel has the money to purchase a lot.

Ms. Layfield asked E. Whaley for the security grant total. E. Whaley responded with \$2,500.

Ms. Layfield asked if the Town Council would host a town wide clean up day. Town Council President, K. Phillips, stated that the Town may host a town wide cleanup later in the year.

Mr. LeCates asked for a status update on the Chipman property. M. Shaver responded by stating that the Town Council needs the attorney's advice before doing anything else with the property, such as a Sheriff's Sale. The issue of code enforcement was brought up among citizens and Town Council. Town Council President, K. Phillips, stated that the Town needs to get information to new citizens regarding Ordinances.

(13) Adjourn Meeting: The meeting was adjourned by Town Council President, K. Phillips, at 8:28P.M.

Submitted by:

Emily F. Whaley
Town Council Secretary